

Cottonwood/Marble Canyon Loop Hike

Distance	26 to 32 mile loop with at least 12 miles of the hike on a primitive dirt road
Time	3 to 5 days
Start	8 miles NW of Stovepipe Wells at mouth of canyon, or 11 miles NW of Stovepipe Wells at the Marble Canyons junction. (requires 4x4 high clearance)
Elevation gain	3,500 feet
Vehicle access	first 8 miles high clearance; next 3 miles to Marble Canyon junction requires 4x4 high clearance.
Difficulty	moderate to strenuous depending on experience and physical conditioning
Trail	cross country hike (no trail except 12 miles of dirt road) Hiking is through a brushy wash or rocky canyon. No signage or route markers.
Water	Cottonwood Canyon and Deadhorse Canyon (be sure to treat water)
Permit	free permit at Furnace Creek Visitor Center or Stovepipe Wells
Topo maps	Cottonwood Canyon & Harris Hill, 7.5 min. topos (both are necessary)
Other maps	Death Valley AAA, Harrison or NG/TI maps. Watch your odometer mileage closely as the Marble Canyon junction sign is up high & difficult to locate.
Highlights	flowing water, cottonwood trees, wildlife, deep, narrow canyons and wilderness

Valuable Information and Warnings:

- The recommended direction for the loop hike is clockwise starting up Cottonwood Canyon and returning via Marble Canyon to maximize water locations and minimize contact with other hikers.
- Thick vegetation and brush chokes the wet areas of Cottonwood Canyon. A path around the vegetation can be found sometimes on the north side and often on the south side of the wash. Follow the path of least resistance. Camp away from flowing water.
- About 300 yards beyond upper Cottonwood Spring turn right (north) up a dry wash, then hike another 2 miles looking closely for the unmarked pass on your right. This low spot on the ridge is where you start the route toward Marble Canyon. There is no marked route or clearly defined path, just zig zag your way up to the pass.
- **DO NOT try to descend the canyon that drains beyond the dry spring at 4200 ft.,** (it flows in a southeasterly direction back toward Cottonwood Canyon). **It has impassable dry falls.**
- Practice **Leave No Trace** camping ethics.
- Along the cross-country route, the path on the east side of the pass is fairly clear, just follow it down into the basin, then cross the basin above the 4200 ft. spring (no recoverable water) to the ridge, then follow the path easterly along the ridge past the first steep descent into Deadhorse Canyon, then pass in front off a small hill, then descend 600 feet to Deadhorse Canyon (via a less steep drainage).
- Deadhorse Canyon below the spring is choked with vegetation, follow the path on the left slope or west side of the canyon hiking downhill. Easy hiking the rest of the way down Marble Canyon with potential explorations up several side canyons.
- As of March, 2008 **the Deadhorse Canyon spring has a good flow of water and has been dependable for the past decade.**
- This loop hike is the most popular backpacking trip in the park. Please respect other campers by camping out of sight and sound of your neighbors.
- The wilderness desert environment can be unforgiving. It is your responsibility to be fully prepared. Be sure to consult a Ranger if you need more information.